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## HAVE THE AMERICAS A COMMON HISTORY?

*A United States View* by WILLIAM C. BINKLEY

*A Canadian View* by GEORGE W. BROWN

*A Mexican View* by EDMUNDO O'GORMAN

*A South American View* by GERMAN ARCINIEGAS

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## HAVE THE AMERICAS A COMMON HISTORY?

THIS symposium of papers was presented at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago on December 29 last, in a session devoted to the general subject of "The History of the Americas." The contributors are Professor William C. Binkley of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee; Professor George W. Brown, The University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada; Professor Edmundo O'Gorman, The University of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico; Señor German Arciniegas, Ministro de Educacion, Ministerio de Educacion Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia. The papers have been printed in the order in which they were read. [EDITOR'S NOTE]

### I

#### A UNITED STATES VIEW

THE fact that the general topic for discussion in this session is stated in the form of a question suggests that we are seeking an answer without knowing in advance what that answer will be. If this be the case, our question becomes nothing more than a working hypothesis whose validity we, as historians, must undertake to test; and so long as we proceed on that basis it makes little difference whether our tentative assumption is an affirmative or a negative answer. Our method must be that of examining the facts, not merely as isolated incidents or events, but as part of the process of social development, for it is generally agreed that "historical facts are those which form a part of that great stream of interrelation which is Time," and that the historical attitude consists in seeing things in their relation to others, both in space and in time. At every stage of our procedure, however, we must treat our tentative answer as the hypothesis inviting free investigation, and must not let it become a fixed theory which will control the investigation. By doing this, of course, we shall probably come to the close of the discussion without having arrived at a final

answer, but if in the course of the discussion we succeed in raising questions and offering suggestions which must be considered in any attempt to find the answer, we will have fulfilled the primary purpose of this session.

Before we can proceed with our investigation it is perhaps advisable to examine the implications of the question itself. This need not mean a definition of terms. We know what we mean by "the Americas," and in this case it seems clear that we are using the term "history" not so much in the professional sense of a record or narrative of past events as in the popular sense of the events themselves, or the sequence of experiences of the past. But when we ask the question, "Have the Americas a common history?" do we mean to imply that if we find any differences we rule out all possibility of finding any past experiences or interests which have been shared by the Americas? The simplest rules of logic, as well as the human experience out of which such rules have evolved, require us to admit that individuals and groups may have had much in common in their past without having had an identical past. Thus we cannot hope to establish the absence of a common history simply by showing that there have been important differences in the past experiences of the American peoples; we would have to show that none of their past experiences can be considered as common experiences. It must be obvious at once that this is no simple task.

But there is a somewhat broader implication in our general question, which should not be overlooked. If we put the question back into the context of the developments out of which it arose, there is reason to believe that the term "a common history" is intended to refer to the possibility of presenting a synthetic view of the past experiences of all the Americas as distinguished from a particularistic view of the past of each individual American nation. As you know, this possibility was suggested in its most definite form by Professor Herbert E. Bolton in his presidential address before this Association nine years ago.<sup>1</sup> To quote one commentator, that address "presents in broad synthesis the panorama of Western Hemisphere history as a whole, cutting across national boundaries and pointing out unities, contrasts, and interrelations between the different portions of the Continent." Despite the profound impression made by the address, the validity of such a synthesis has not been universally acknowledged by historians,

<sup>1</sup>Herbert E. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America" (*American Historical Review*, XXXVIII, April, 1933, 448-74).



either in this country or in Latin America; and it is out of the resulting discussions that our present question has arisen. It might be said in passing that a careful examination of these discussions seems to leave the impression that the chief difficulty lies in the failure of the critics to understand that a synthesis does not necessarily tie the nations themselves together into a unified system, but that it is concerned, instead, with presenting a comprehensive view of the similarities, contrasts, and interrelations of their past experiences as a means of providing a basis for a clearer understanding of the local or national history of each of them.

This brings us to a third possible implication of our question. Does the suggestion that the Americas may possess something in common imply the existence of a composite unity in which the various American nations are bound together by political, or economic, or cultural interests, or perhaps by all three? It is obvious, of course, that no such unity exists in a corporate sense, but unless we can demonstrate the absence of any community of interests in present-day America we must admit the possibility of its existence in a less tangible form. And if it does exist in any form it at least suggests the presence of common interests in the past—that is, of a common history.

Actually, however, these possible implications do not present three distinct problems, and when considered in their relation to each other they form the basis of procedure for testing the validity of our hypothesis. Thus if our answer to the general question is to be negative, we must show that the American nations have not had any common interests or experiences in the past; that it is not possible to present a synthetic view of American development; and that nothing in the present-day interests of the Americas brings them closer to each other than to the rest of the world. In attempting to do this we must, of course, recognize the fact that neither differences nor similarities alone can give the answer. We must examine both and must try to see their effects upon each other as well as upon the Americas as a whole.

Any cursory examination of the sequence of past events in the Western Hemisphere reveals what seem to be fundamental differences in background, experiences, and concepts. The work of colonization was carried out by individual European powers, for the most part in competition with each other. Differences in motives and differences in methods are too well known to require elaboration here. Spaniards and Portuguese, Frenchmen and Englishmen brought their own concepts and loyalties—economic, religious,

and political—and these were not effaced by the new environment. Differences in the stage of advancement of the native races in various parts of the New World contributed toward further diversities in matters of policy and administration. That the colonial experience can hardly be said to have established either unity or uniformity for the Americas, would seem to be demonstrated by the lack of concerted action in their struggles for independence.

But this is only one side of the coin. A careful examination of the other side seems to bring to light equally fundamental similarities, and possibly even common experiences and interests during the colonial and revolutionary period. In the first place, all of the American colonies sprang from the broad background of Western European civilization just as Europe was completing the transition from the medieval to the modern order, and each of them reflected the influence of the general heritage as well as the peculiar characteristics of the mother country. Professor Bolton has pointed out, for example, that the Spanish *encomienda*, the Portuguese *capitania*, the French *seignior*y, the Dutch *patroon*, and the English proprietary grant were all survivals of feudalism in slightly varying forms. It might be added that mercantilism itself was not the private property of any particular colonizing power, but was a European concept which each of them sought to apply to its own advantage.

In the second place, all went through the process of adjusting European concepts and institutions to the New World environment. Because of distance from the mother country, and more especially because the contact with a vast region whose resources and people might be exploited created hopes and expectations which had no influence on the members of the Old World communities, the colonists who came to America became mentally unlike their kindred who remained in Europe. Thus, while they were transplanting European civilization to America, they were also adapting its political and social institutions to a new set of conditions, and in doing so were perhaps laying a basis for the development of an American society. It is not possible at this time, of course, to go through the whole range of American colonial history to consider how the details of the adjustments were actually worked out, but it is interesting to note that as the generation of immigrants gradually gave place to a preponderance of native Americans of European ancestry the demand for such adjustments became more insistent. Whether we consider Bacon's rebellion in Virginia, or the Antequera rebellion in Paraguay, or the revolt of the *comun-*



*eros* in New Granada, we find that—whatever may have been their differences—American resentment against hardships imposed by, or special privileges granted to, the ruling European element constituted one of the most important contributing factors in each case.

The climax of this development came in the series of revolutionary movements of the half-century from 1776 to 1826, in which all the European colonies in America were involved. If we look at the fundamental cause and the general result of this movement, instead of concentrating on the absence of concerted action or on differences between English and Spanish and Portuguese methods, we may find indications of similar interests. All of them were concerned with the breaking of European control over American political and economic affairs, and in the end they accomplished this either through revolution and the establishment of complete independence or through evolution and the attainment of autonomy. We must be careful, however, to keep in mind the fact that while the colonial and revolutionary experience may be said to have set the Americas apart from Europe, it had not necessarily given them a common American interest.

When we turn to a consideration of the period since the conclusion of the revolutionary movements, it is easy, of course, to see the differences. The immediate political aftermath of that struggle saw thirteen former English colonies combining to form the United States of America; four former Spanish vice-royalties breaking up into sixteen distinct units; the former Portuguese colony remaining intact as the empire of Brazil; and Canada, representing a merging of loyalist Englishmen with former French subjects, eschewing independence to begin its progress toward self-governing dominion status. As we try to follow the kaleidoscopic pattern through the past hundred years, we find federal republics, unitary republics, empires, dictatorships, and extreme individualism. We find widely varying degrees of progress toward stability and order, with the resultant internal and international jealousies and suspicions. And as a few relatively strong states emerge, we find each of them manifesting a definite tendency to develop along its own lines and thus to emphasize differences.

But during that same period the American states were also developing interests and interrelationships that suggest common or similar ideals and experiences. All of them undertook to set up a more democratic form of government, although their methods of working toward that ideal were not always the same. All have

promoted the concept of peaceful settlement of disputes, despite the fact that it has not always brought peaceful relations. They have participated in a long series of periodic inter-American conferences devoted to the consideration of American problems, common or otherwise. And all of them have shown concern in varying degrees over any threat, either supposed or real, of European political interference in the Western Hemisphere.

It seems clear from this hasty survey that any attempt to answer our question on the basis of either differences or similarities is beside the point. We have both, and our problem becomes that of obtaining the proper perspective to understand their relative importance in the whole course of the American development. Naturally, the adequacy of our perspective will depend upon the vantage point from which we view the scene. To use a somewhat hackneyed analogy, if we are in the forest we can see only the trees; if on an eminence we may see the forest; and if in an aeroplane we may look down upon the entire landscape in which the forest has its setting. Just as we need the aeroplane view to enable us to appreciate more fully the relative place of forest and field, or mountain and plain, or road and stream, in this panorama, so must we try to obtain a comprehensive view of the pattern which is America before we can hope to see the complete meaning of the innumerable events and experiences of the past which, taken together, make up that pattern.

To suggest the possibility of such a view is not necessarily to claim that there is an American civilization. This would make our panorama either all forest or all field. It would be more accurate to say that there is a grouping of cultures in America, sufficiently related to fit into a single view but at the same time possessing characteristics sufficiently different to provide the lights and shades of that view. We have Spanish America, Portuguese America, and English America, with a vestige of French America running like an almost invisible stream through all three. The perfectly obvious fact that all four of the distinguishing adjectives modify the noun "America" not only establishes the vantage point for obtaining our comprehensive view but also suggests the common ground, and thus furnishes the key for determining the relative importance of the similarities and differences.

Our aeroplane view of the whole American scene discloses a variegated pattern whose many colours suggest diversity of origin and yet do not destroy the appearance of relationship between the principal figures. While some features seem, at first glance, to

stand out in sharp contrast, the complete effect of the picture is obtained by giving closer attention to the lights and shades which harmonize these contrasts with the common environment. In the marginal area between Spanish and English America, for example, there appears a blending of cultures, expressed in terms of law, language, architecture, and tradition. Similarly, Canada is neither English nor French, but is the product of the intermingling of the two cultures. The appearance of similar conditions along the periphery of Brazil, where Spanish and Portuguese influences meet, would seem to suggest that the various border zones may hold the key to the ultimate American culture.

But the pattern also contains other lights and shades, by means of which the varied hues of individual events and broad movements or correlative differences and similarities are placed in their proper setting. By examining some of these against the comprehensive background we may be able to gain a clearer conception of their relative importance in the picture. It seems safe to say, for example, that the planting of colonies by individual European powers was less important than the fact that all of them were transplanting European concepts and institutions in the New World. It is possible, also, that the local differences in colonial policy and administration are overshadowed by the general problem of adaptation to the American environment. Inasmuch as the individual struggles for independence were successful, it would be difficult to show that the lack of concerted action was as significant as the fact that all were based on opposition to continued European control in America, and that the result was the creation of American nations.

At the risk of making this list too long, we must extend our examination into the national period. Here we find that the wide variety in the forms of government established seems less important than the fact that all were concerned with obtaining the permanent values of democracy, and that rivalry and wars between individual states are less important than the general promotion of the principle of arbitration. The survival of four different European languages in America has not prevented common support of the Pan American Union and the participation of all in the Pan American conferences. The individual efforts to further their own economic and political advancement seem less important than the fact that the World War did not divide them into opposing camps. And while the historian cannot speak with complete assurance about the present, it seems reasonable to say that even the accumulation of all their differences, as expressed in suspicions, jealousies,



and misunderstandings, has not been strong enough to overcome their desire to maintain and promote hemisphere solidarity in the present world crisis.

This is by no means a complete picture, but if the selections are representative and if the associations are valid it becomes clear that when analogous similarities and differences are considered against the broad background of American development the similarities seem to stand out more prominently than do the differences. It is possible that the real contribution of the differences has been the creation of the individualities, while the similarities provide the basis on which these individualities may develop common interests. Thus, whatever may have been the immediate effect of those differences, it seems safe to say that instead of destroying all possibility of finding common interests they actually form an essential part of the broad process in which the individual American nations and cultures have gone through experiences and developed interests that are fundamentally common to the Americas as a whole. Whether these common experiences and interests have brought about a distinct American civilization, it is not yet possible to say; but they do mean the existence of common traditions, and they do establish a basis for a "History of the Americas."

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## II

### A CANADIAN VIEW

IN a discussion so broad as that suggested in our topic it is inevitable—and desirable—that the papers should suggest different approaches to the theme. One approach is that which compares the cultural developments of various parts of the Americas in an attempt to determine whether from a variety of European origins there is being created some common type or pattern. Coming as I do from a country where two cultural strains have been intermingled for one hundred and eighty years and where others in lesser proportion have been added by later immigration, I would be one of the last to minimize the importance of this approach. Indeed I beg leave to request that as this discussion goes on it should not be forgotten that Latin American culture is not wholly

confined to the region south of the Rio Grande. A segment of it with a history stretching back over three centuries is found on the lower St. Lawrence.

I have chosen, however, another approach than the cultural in the short time at my disposal. It seems to me to have significance at the present time. The paper which I am about to read was written in September. The events of the past three weeks have not disposed me to alter it.

The continent is "indissoluble" wrote Whitman as he ranged through the vast stretch of rivers and lakes, forests, farm lands and prairies from the Saguenay to the Rockies. Sixty years later the historian cannot but underwrite the essential truth of that poetic judgment. North America—the Americas—*have* a common history. But how then shall we explain and interpret its apparent anomalies? How shall we sift out its essentials?

For Canada these anomalies run like a red thread through the very texture of the last hundred and fifty years. Canada has come to nationhood by a process which seems to mark her off in sharp contrast from her American neighbours. They won independence through revolution, casting off at a stroke European control, monarchy, and the shackles of mercantilism. Their national traditions have centred around these triumphant struggles for freedom. Canada's tradition contains no such struggle; she has gained nationhood through a century of evolution and at times it seems to have been not so much won as thrust upon her. Mercantilism in the first decades of the nineteenth century was for her not a chafing burden but a stimulus and a bond of empire—a "hot-bed" to use Burke's phrase for the staples on which her prosperity rested. The first long step towards autonomy—the winning of responsible government as it is termed in Canadian history—far from being a repudiation of British practices was an admission in colonial government of the principles of the cabinet system, the most distinctively British device in the whole range of constitutional government. The winning of responsible government a century ago was neither a colonial victory nor a British defeat. It was the triumph of both British and colonial reformers over conservatism, reaction, and timidity on both sides of the Atlantic. It marked the passing of the old colonial system, and looked forward not to separation but to an empire infused with a new spirit and held together by a new principle.

The acceptance of responsible government was essentially an

act of faith on the part of that small minority who really believed in it, for they staked everything on the assumption that the real bonds between British America and Britain were not those relations which could be defined within the covers of a statute book, but were the intangibles and imponderables of common interests, economic, political, and cultural, which could not be weighed and measured.

These are the ties [said Burke] which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron. Let the colonies always keep the idea of their civil rights associated with your government, they will cling and grapple to you. . . . Slavery they can have anywhere. It is a weed that grows in every soil. They may have it from Spain, they may have it from Prussia. . . . Freedom they can have from none but you. . . . Do not entertain so weak an imagination, as that your registers and your sufferances, your cockets and your clearances, are what form the great securities of your commerce. Do not dream that your letters of office, and your instructions and your suspending clauses, are the things that hold together the great contexture of the mysterious whole. These things do not make your government. Dead instruments, passive tools as they are. . . . All this, I know well enough, will sound wild and chimerical to the profane herd of those vulgar and mechanical politicians, who have no place among us; a sort of people who think that nothing exists but what is gross and material; and who therefore, far from being qualified to be directors of the great movement of empire, are not fit to turn a wheel in the machine. But to men truly initiated and rightly taught, these ruling and master principles, which, in the opinion of such men as I have mentioned, have no substantial existence, are in truth everything, and all in all. Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together.

Burke's faith, affirmed in these immortal words, was the faith of those who believed that responsible government was a cementing, not a disrupting, principle. Working itself out through all the variations of economic and political change, the spirit and practice of responsible government transformed the empire. Autonomy through co-operation, freedom through evolution—these became the pole-stars of imperial policy at its best, and in spite of backslidings and inconsistencies the course of the empire's development followed them. So the ancient British principle of respect for the rights of the individual as an individual was by inexorable logic extended into respect for the rights of the colonies as colonies.

These cementing principles, to use again Burke's phrase, are to be seen in the central episode of Canada's national development—the Confederation of 1867. Confederation was achieved, not in opposition to British policy but in the end with the aid of British policy and through a combination of forces running strongly on both sides of the Atlantic. So too with the extension of the Dominion westward to the Pacific. Canada gained a western



empire—the vast domain of the Hudson's Bay Company—because she herself was part of an empire.

This is the paradox of Canadian history—nationhood emerging not through revolution and separation but through the mingling of two opposing elements—autonomy and co-operation. Its supreme illustration may, in the judgment of the future, be Canada's entrance into the present war. Without hesitation she ranged herself at Britain's side in a deadly struggle whose immediate origins were European, but her manner of doing so was an affirmation—the clearest in her history—that she had attained the stature of nationhood and assumed its full responsibilities. The decision to declare war was made on September 9, 1939, by the Parliament of Canada, and on the following day, precisely one week after Britain's entry into the conflict, King George VI as King of Canada, acting on the advice of his Canadian ministers, announced that Canada was at war. This historic decision, the most momentous it may be in Canada's history, marked the culmination of a process which had spanned a century.

To emphasize this paradox of autonomy coupled with imperial co-operation is not to deny that there have been cross-currents of friction and misunderstanding. Canadian historians have traced them with minute care in following the growth of autonomy, but as yet they have largely neglected the more baffling and more comprehensive task of trying to understand the compelling tendencies toward co-operation which have dominated Canadian policy at every period of real crisis. No, the paradox is not an anomaly. It is the very stuff of which Canadian history is made.

But if we accept this paradox, with all its implications—a paradox which seems to contradict the pattern of national growth in every other American country—how shall we accept the affirmation with which this paper began, that the Americas have a common history? It is not enough to say that Canadian culture, institutions, and habits of living have American elements. No one would deny that. But today another standard of judgment forces itself upon us. Every great age in history has its central issue. Ours is the problem of a world order, and that problem is the touchstone to which at this moment every consideration must be brought.

Canada in entering the war responded to forces that have flowed deeply through her history. Are these forces alien to the rest of America or are they not?—that is the question. It is my deep conviction that they are not. "Canada," said Premier King, speaking in the heart of war-scarred London, "is a nation of the new

world." It was as a nation of the New World that she threw down the gage of battle. She was never more American than when she did so, and two years of war have confirmed her in that belief.

What then are the forces which run so deeply through the history of the Americas that they resolve the paradox which seems to separate Canada and her neighbours? They are the common interests which the American nations north and south have in the Atlantic world. For over three hundred years the Americas have shared in its creation. It is the framework within which by varying processes and at different times we have all grown from colonialism to maturity. It has been an essential element in our history, and yet for the most part we have ignored the fact of its existence.

The Atlantic unites, it does not merely divide, and from the beginnings of our colonial development this has been so. No fallacy in our thinking has been more appalling in its consequences than our failure to assess the implications of this truism. The revolutions which broke political ties with Europe profoundly affected, but did not destroy, the infinite network of relationships, economic and cultural, which made the Atlantic world. Always, therefore, running through American history, there have been the contradictory elements of separation from, and association with, Europe. Canada's paradox of autonomy and co-operation is not un-American; it is the American experience in a unique form.

But why are we only now becoming conscious of the Atlantic world? Precisely because it is passing through a revolutionary change. The Atlantic world of the nineteenth century is disappearing, has disappeared—a new order is in the making, and whether we like it or not we of the Americas must have a share in determining its guiding principles.

We had a share in the old order, though we scarcely knew it—our responsibilities were so light that we had no sense of compulsion. That order of the nineteenth century was the Pax Britannica, and though it was neither a Pax, nor Britannica, it was a reality. It stretched beyond the Atlantic basin and in a sense embraced the world. Let me quote an American definition and description of it. Harold and Margaret Sprout write in their book, *Toward a New Order of Sea Power* (Princeton, 1940): This Pax Britannica, "fostered and was then [in 1890] still supporting a world economy that approached the dimensions of political sovereignty and a world order" (p. ix). And again, "London became the business and financial center of an economic community which eventually embraced not only the British Empire but also many

politically independent countries in several continents. . . . The combined power of fleets and finance enabled British statesmen to wield an influence abroad which approached, though it never quite attained, the dimensions of sovereignty and a world order" (p. 274).

The "stupid" Englishman, with that inspired stupidity which enrages his enemies and baffles his friends, seemed never quite to understand the order which he did so much to create. He issued no blue prints of it, never attempted to force on the world a regimented acceptance of it, and never even worked out its principles to a logical conclusion. True to its character, it was full of inconsistencies: freedom of trade it had, but not full free trade; parliamentary government, but applied by each nation in its own way; respect for the rights of nations as nations, but never a fully organized system of international co-operation based on the principles of national sovereignty.

This was the order in which we of the Americas grew to national maturity. It was a kindly order, and as we look back on it we can see that with all its anomalies it went far in its time toward a solution of that age-old problem which has vexed mankind in so many forms—the harmonizing of liberty and law.

What were the sanctions of the Pax Britannica?—for every political order, even a quasi-one, must have its sanctions. Characteristically they were tangled and pragmatic, not systematized and formal. Nevertheless they were there, and chief among them was the British navy's command of the seas. This was, to quote Mr. and Mrs. Sprout once more, "the historic balance wheel of the vast, intricate, and swiftly moving machinery of that advantageous world economic community and quasi-political order which British sea power had fostered and supported."

For the Americas the British navy was a guarantee of stability in the Atlantic world—a first line of defence against any European threat which would menace the integrity or freedom of American nations. Such was the meaning of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823—it was in essence bilateral, Britain and the United States guaranteeing the permanence of the American revolutions in the face of reactionary Europe. Through the Monroe Doctrine the young American nations got essentially the same protection which Canada had through her connection with the Empire. Let it not be thought that I am suggesting that Britain was moved by some kind of doctrinaire altruism. Far from it—doctrinaire altruism does no

one good in the long run. She was acting in her own interest, but it was by and large in the interest also of the Americas.

This fundamental identity of British and American interests in maintaining control of the Atlantic against the threat of any hostile power, while often obscured by superficial differences, has never been far below the surface. "The day that France takes possession of New Orleans," wrote Jefferson in an oft-quoted pronouncement, "fixes the sentence which is to restrain her forever within her low water mark. It seals the union of two nations who in conjunction can maintain exclusive possession of the ocean. From that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation." "With the British navy combined with our own," wrote Madison, "we have nothing to fear from the rest of the world; and in the great struggle of the epoch between liberty and despotism, we owe it to ourselves to sustain the former, in this hemisphere at least."

To Great Britain and the United States [wrote Mahan], if they rightly estimate the part they may play in the great drama of human progress, is entrusted a maritime interest, in the broadest sense of the word, which demands as one of the conditions of its exercise and its safety, the organized force adequate to control the general course of events at sea; to maintain, if necessity arise, not arbitrarily but as between those in whom interest and power alike justify the claim to do so, the laws that shall regulate maritime warfare. This is no mere speculation, resting upon a course of specious reasoning, but is based on the teaching of the past.

It was this fundamental identity of interests—the necessity with Britain of controlling the Atlantic and the destiny of the Atlantic world—that brought the United States and the Americas into the war of 1914-18. The obscuring of this fact—the failure to recognize its implications—was one of the appalling misfortunes of the post-war period.

Today the same fundamental identity of interests is teaching its unanswerable lesson. When France collapsed and the eastern bastions of the Atlantic world as we had known it seemed crumbling beyond repair, when invasion of Britain and the destruction or capture of the British fleet were stark possibilities, an intuitive realization of common danger swept over the people of these continents. For the first time since 1823 we are literally threatened with the danger described in Monroe's message—the danger that a hostile system will be extended to this hemisphere. The Battle of the Atlantic, and the Atlantic Declaration, are answers to that threat just as were the union of British and American interests when Monroe issued his historic pronouncement a century and a quarter ago.



The first of Mahan's books on the influence of sea power, published in 1890, appeared, as great books have a way of doing, at a turning point in history. The peculiar set of circumstances which had made possible Britain's unrivalled naval power was on the eve of change. The creation of navies elsewhere, inventions and changes in warfare such as the submarine and the aeroplane—these and other circumstances marked, as we can see in retrospect, the end of one epoch, the beginning of another,—the epoch in which we live. The Pax Britannica was destined to pass but what was to replace it? Could its essential principles be merged and projected into a new world order—a world order still preserving that balance between law and liberty which marked the Pax Britannica at its best, and still affirming that respect for the right of the individual nation which at bottom rests on respect for the right of the individual man? Or would it give way to a Pax Germanica based on fallacious theories of blood and race, and exalting brute force to the level of a moral principle? Or were we to have hemispheres organizing and regimenting themselves in preparation for conflict on a scale which baffles our imagination? Today, fifty years after these questions began to pose themselves, we face them unavoidably. The twentieth century demands that they be answered. In relation to them the Americas *have* a common history—a history which challenges them to a common responsibility.

GEORGE W. BROWN

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### III

#### A MEXICAN VIEW

*History which generalizes is history which falsifies* (Antonio Caso).

It has been asked whether or not the Americas have a common history. To answer, it will undoubtedly be necessary to question the facts and then allow them to tell us the truth, because they alone contain it. However, some initial and introductory reflections will not be out of place.

First, note that the question already implies in its very enunciation, the individual existence of the two Americas. If we accept the problem, it will be necessary to accept as well its implications. That is to say, we admit that the two Americas exist as distinct

worlds, as two realities. This acceptance rests upon the immediate fact of our observation, and is not merely a logical implication of the statement of the problem. That the two Americas exist as distinct and separate realities, is patent. Hence this investigation is reduced to a search for the principle or cause which has made the two Americas present themselves to us in reality as two different entities.

Now, the question before us is whether or not these two worlds have a common history. But the question is no sooner formulated than the faint light of suspicion appears. Do not the two Americas present themselves to us in reality as two distinct worlds, precisely because their history is distinct? Is not history their source of individuality? Or, in other terms, may it not perhaps be true that these two American worlds have no further entity than that of their history; that their history constitutes and defines them; that their history is their being?

In fact, that is my belief. Anglo-America and Latin America are what they are, because their history is what it is. The matter is very clear and simple, but I am not to blame for that. I shall have the right to exact of anyone who may not agree, that he tell me what are the two Americas, and that he do so without recourse to any description or historical narration. This undertaking, however, seems impossible to me. The two American worlds are historical entities. They are not abstract entities. They are not things endowed with a fixed and static being. The two Americas are concrete realities whose changing and variable being is the very history which has formed and which constitutes them. Let it not be said, then, that the Americas have history; rather, say that they are history. But if the Americas are history, we shall have to agree that their history, that is to say their being, is not a common and single history, because we should be denying the obvious. If the history of the two Americas were common, what we call the two Americas would not exist.

There are those who, by surrendering completely to a teleological view of history, wish to construct a definite synthesis from the historical facts of the American continent. They try to form a conception of the historical structure of the continent, arbitrarily violating those facts, by forcing them into the preconceived mould of a "common history." They suppose it to be only possible to conceive of the continental historical structure if the facts of Anglo-American life balance those of Latin-American life, and so, with no further ado, they hunt for resemblances and begin a sifting away



of differences. Once their arbitrary task is done, they raise, more or less brilliantly according to their personal literary talent, the image of a single America—a mutilated America, according to my belief. But this method is radically false.

I am the first to believe that the time has come to go beyond the nationalistic view of history in America, because I also believe that the time has come to go beyond nationalities themselves; but that is enormously far from believing that the historical life of Anglo-America is essentially identical with that of Latin America.

The followers of the thesis of the "common history" seek the greatest number—note the quantitative concept—of similar traits in order to establish identity, and they consider every difference as though it were some unimportant residue, without reflecting that a single one of those differences can be decisive. Let us not lose this golden rule from sight: among the most dissimilar things it is always possible to find similarities. But these tell nothing. What is important for knowledge is to emphasize the differences which actually reveal reality to us—the individual, concrete, and peculiar reality of the comparison.

Moreover, this mathematical method applied to history, which is human life, suffers from a very grave error of perspective. The seeker for similarities judges the facts of the past from the point of view in which he, the spectator, is situated and in conformity with the index of preferences valid for him and for the epoch in which he lives. For that reason his vision of history is teleological; he supposes that in the past the world in which he, the spectator, now finds himself was predetermined and that its preferences have always been the same, in every epoch. It will seem to him that past facts, in truth dissimilar, are similar in their teleology, and he will believe that certain traits are essential when in truth they may very well be secondary or even non-existent for the life and period which he so arbitrarily judges. He commits not only an error, but an injustice. He deprives the vital process of its liberty, imposing from without the chains of an arbitrary finality. For example, he may think that the spirit which animated the primitive colonizers of North America is, because of its finality, exactly the same as that which animated the conquerors of Mexico, because during the course of time the United States and Mexico adopted the Republican, federal, democratic form of government. Or he will think that fundamental in the Spanish colonization in America is the economic factor, simply because that factor seems to him to be fundamental in the historic process.

But let us examine some of the similarities which have been adduced as the basis of "the great unities manifest in American history",<sup>1</sup> those unities out of which men have attempted to construct continental history.

They begin by conceiving the discovery of America as a uniform fact, identical for the whole hemisphere, and they emphasize in the phenomenon the consideration of a European expansion. But how false this vision of the great event turns out to be! To speak in this way of the discovery of America is an abstract, more or less romantic, interpretation of a series of events of diverse character and distinct meaning. The discovery in the north is radically different from the discovery of Columbus. In a mechanistic or naturalistic concept of history, one is considered as the cause of the other; but the historical truth is that it is a question of two distinct realities. This will be clearly seen simply by noting that the voyage realized by Columbus is a composite event, which appears in the transit from the Middle Ages to the Modern Period, but which by its physiognomy is more a medieval than a modern phenomenon. When we read the primitive Columbian documents we are the ones who discover that Columbus discovered America; he, Columbus, only linked up the loose end left trailing in space by the medieval voyage of Marco Polo.

But the real differences between the two Americas become ever more acute. It has been said that great unity exists in the colonial systems of Latin America and of Anglo-America, because their similarities are more notable than their differences. Let us see. It seems that these similarities are: (a) identical mercantile aims, that is to say, exploitation of the colonies for the benefit of the colonizing peoples; (b) establishment of governments of the contemporary European type, adapted to the American scene; (c) general slavery of the Negroes; (d) exploitation of the work of the natives; and (e) mixture of races.

Much could be said with respect to the truth of such similarities. For me, they exist only as superficial abstractions. In fact, note that those supposed similarities belong, in their essential traits, in the picture of all colonization, American or otherwise. This means that they are not at all a peculiar and concrete part of the history of the two Americas, but rather notes that describe the abstract formula designated by the name of "colonization." The reality, the historical and exact truth, is not the general and

<sup>1</sup>Herbert E. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America" (*American Historical Review*, XXXVIII, April, 1933, 448-74).

abstract fact of the slavery of the Negroes, the exploitation of the work of the natives, and the mixing of races, but the form in which these things occurred and the way in which they were put into effect within the system of convictions and beliefs at that time valid.

Now, Anglo-American colonization is separated and distinguished from that of Latin America precisely by the fact that each one develops within systems of convictions and beliefs that are very different and even contradictory. The difference in systems of convictions and beliefs is the very origin of the existence of the two Americas as historically distinct worlds. The decisive aspect of the situation, is not—as is usually considered—to be found in ethnic differences between Anglo-Saxons and Hispanic-Latins, but in the difference coming from the very peculiar historical situation in which these two European groups find themselves in the very concrete and peculiar moment in which the New World appears on the scene of Christian culture. Thought that wishes to explain all the differences between the two American worlds by means of the purely racial, animal, biological factor, is monstrous. I believe that if we do not consider the accident of America, from its very origin, in a union of mutual interdependence with that other, greater accident which is the advent of the Modern World, we shall never be able to apprehend one or the other in their reality.

Very well. But the advent of the Modern World is neither more nor less than the appearance of a new system of convictions and beliefs, different from the system which was previously accepted and held valid. It is not a new theory, a new idea, or a new philosophy. It is something more profoundly vital. It is a new faith. Faith in Reason. Reason becomes converted into the supreme value, the supreme instance of life. But this new faith conflicts with the old faith, and this causes a tremendous lack of harmony in the bosom of Christendom. In this lack of harmony is synthesized the dramatic moment of the transit from the Medieval World to the Modern World. It is highly important to keep firmly in mind this great adventure of Christian culture if one wishes to understand completely the historical structure of America. It was the destiny of Spain to be converted into the defender of the ancient faith; England, in the political sphere, quickly became converted into the standard bearer of the new. The whole vision of the world changes, and also there is a change in man's concept of himself. On the historical scene, the new man

makes his entrance—the new Adam, armed with that new magic which is called experimental science. Sir Francis Bacon is no casual phenomenon in the history of English philosophical thought. Domination of nature and the utilization of hitherto unused cosmic forces, was the vital new project. Europe hurls herself unrestrainedly along these new roads, and Spain, the champion of old values, is left behind. This is the deep meaning of what the historians call, without understanding, the decadence of Spain. It is astonishing to hear that decadence spoken of as a consequence of certain economic, administrative, or racial factors. Remember that the attitude of Spain in that epoch has in itself no decadence; on the contrary, it is vigorous and heroic.

It is in the crossing made by the clash of the two opposing forces that we must locate the origins of the two American worlds, and it is there where we must go to seek the essential peculiarities of each. America is born in the midst of discord; hence there are two distinct and historically opposed Americas. This is the basic idea in any complete understanding of the great difference between the colonial systems of Latin America and Anglo-America.

Spain deposited, cultivated, and developed in one part of the western hemisphere a repertory of values, a type of life, a system of convictions and beliefs which correspond to the peculiar situation which she occupied in European destiny at the moment when modern man made his appearance in the drama of universal history. On the other hand, other peoples, and finally England, sowed in another portion of the continent the seed of modern man, dominant and powerful, the man more vitally valuable for the continuation of life and of culture.

These two American worlds—more the work of man than of God, as one writer has said—have followed the respective paths traced for them by the initial impulse which created them. In American flesh European discord is incarnate, and two distinct worlds rise in their historical planes. Anglo-America is more modern than Latin America. In the New World is reproduced the historical unevenness of Europe.

I reserve for a book which I am planning the development *in extenso* of this fundamental observation. Here I shall only be able to indicate what seems decisive to me in the historical structure of America. It is this: the historical unevenness produced in Europe by the advent of the Modern World is aggravated in America. In Latin America there is an historical step backward—not a primitivism, as Hegel thought; in Anglo-America there is



a leap ahead. This observation is founded upon a careful study of the most varied sectors of the American colonial life, of its architecture, its historiography, its economy; upon a certain peculiar manner of conceiving of the universe, man and time; upon North American political constitutionalism—an ingenious manifestation of modern life; and upon Puritanism, an authentic tradition of North America.

In general terms it can be said that Spanish colonization is animated by a medieval spirit; whatever it contains that is modern is a blemish in it. Anglo-American colonization is of pure modern inspiration; whatever it contains that is medieval is, in it and for it, an unjustified limitation. The Puritan, the man whose defect in his time was that of being too modern, saw in America, literally and vitally, a golden land of promise, of liberation; for the Spaniard, America is, without hyperbole, an unredeemed and black land, the vast empire of the Devil.

And this is why the American phenomenon, taken in its authentic complexity and concretion, reveals a structure formed by two worlds in acute historical disequilibrium. This is no abstract concept. It is a reality—the concrete American historical reality which shades and transcends all manifestations of American material and spiritual life.

I believe that this profound and original difference between the two Americas, that this definite lack of equilibrium, exists today. I believe that this is the picture which represents the historical reality of the continent; I believe that a clear and distinct perception of the difference between the two Americas is the inescapable condition for knowing in their original and concrete authenticity the great facts of American history. I believe, finally, that to have demonstrated the essential difference between the two Americas is to have demonstrated that, despite some purely abstract similarities, the colonial systems in both are radically different.

Neither can it be maintained, as men have tried to do, that the struggle for nationality is a unifying continental phenomenon which begins in 1776 and concludes in 1826. Here perhaps the error is more easily perceptible. North American nationality is the political result of a union of originally separate groups, while in Spanish America a disintegration of a pre-existent unity was first necessary. North American federation is a spontaneous formula of association; federation in Latin America is a formula of imitation. In Mexico, for example, it was necessary to create

the states legally, that is to say artificially, so that they could federate. Study the mentality of a man like Franklin and that of a man like the Mexican Dr. Cos and the definitely opposite spirit which animated these men will be noted. Read the parliamentary and constitutional documents relative to independence in the two Americas, and you will arrive at the conclusion that North American independence reveals a unifying force and that Latin American independence is primarily a force of disintegration. Independence in the two Americas means very different things—other antecedents, other motives, another spirit, other intentions, another epoch. Let it not be said, then, that it is a question of a continental unitary phenomenon, because this is only a purely formal abstraction which corresponds to no reality.

To manifest the Americas in their sharp contrast, we can summarize by saying that colonization in Latin America is an effort to create a unity of the Christian imperial type, while North American colonization is an atomic creation. Independence in Latin America is a movement of dispersion, a scattering; on the other hand, in Anglo-America independence is a movement of fusion. In the former, political liberation does not create nationality as it did for the latter. The Latin American nationalities, finally, obey no spontaneous formula, but a formula of imitation, precisely that of Anglo-American nationality. Is any sharper contrast possible?

It has been said also that, in general, the relations between the two Americas have been good and cordial and that this constitutes one more proof of continental historical unity. To me, neither does it seem exact to say that those relations have been generally good and cordial, nor, in case they had been, would that have constituted a proof of unity. The problem of the relations between the two Americas is extremely complex, and it is not possible to despatch it with the vague and indefinite concept of solidarity or by saying that relations are good or bad. Study limited to diplomatic and commercial relations covers only one aspect, and assuredly not the most profound. It has been a common error to confuse international relations with relations between the two Americas. There is a connection between these two things, but they are distinct. Relations between the two American worlds belong rather to the field of historical psychology. I have my opinion about this which some day I hope to be able to state with some decorum; according to that opinion, it seems to me that if those relations prove anything, it is the great



difference which separates the two Americas rather than a continental unity. In my judgment, the profoundly important aspect of the problem which must be solved lies in the sphere of spiritual and moral forces. I believe that until now the relations between the two Americas have had as a basis a deep lack of comprehension, not in the purely intellectual sense, but a spiritual incomprehension which has originated from a mutual and reiterated ethical disesteem. Recall the extraordinary book of José Enrique Rodó, which, unjust or not, is a beautiful and facile expression of an authentic sentiment of the Hispanic-American creole soul. "Although I do not love them, I admire them," says Rodó, directing himself to the Latin youth of the New World and referring to the North Americans. Do not let us forget either the brilliant José Martí, who notes as the greatest peril of "our America [the Latin] the disdain for the formidable neighbour who is unacquainted with it." And what should be said of the feeling Bolívar expressed in these words of his—"The United States, which seem destined by Providence to infest America with wretchedness in the name of liberty?"

I hold the absolute conviction that we will progress much more in the knowledge of the relations between the two Americas, as they have really existed, if we succeed in disclosing the whole potential load of resentment involved in the epithets "Greasers" and "Gringos," than if we write a whole library about international treaties and conventions.<sup>2</sup>

And much more should be added to all this. For example, one should show how spiritually diverse is the substratum of economic life in the two American worlds; how different their artistic temperament; and how broad the religious gulf which extends between them. But let us content ourselves with these simple, eloquent indications and recall only this—that the code and the key to authentic understanding of all these questions is in not losing from sight the peculiar structure of America which is, all of it, based on the original lack of equilibrium between the two spheres. This is the decisive formula and the great secret.

There is no sense, then, in speaking of a "common history" of the two Americas, because either it is common history in the

<sup>2</sup>When I note the essential differences between the two Americas and demonstrate the structural disequilibrium in the history of the continent, I do not by any means imply that it is impossible to realize the great promise contained in the word America. On the contrary, those differences are what make that task possible. But this question is foreign to this study and for that reason I leave it untouched.

broad sense of being human history and then nothing concrete is being said, or it is common history in the sense of some "great unities" based on some supposed resemblances and then it is fallacy. The same effect is made upon me when I see someone seriously sustain the deceitful formula of a "common history" in order to form a concept of the historical structure of the continent, as would be made upon me by seeing someone taking seriously the equestrian statues with which the peoples of Americas have wished to honour their heroes and ruin their parks and gardens. There we see them, Washington and Bolívar. Both reflect in their faces the high inspiration of their uplifted looks. Both are in incredibly heroic postures, although postures not as incredible as those of the no less surprising white horses on which they are mounted. Around the heroes there is a decoration of more or less moving symbols, and among the cannon, the laurel, and the broken chains, there is always by coincidence an eagle which prepares to take flight. Here the similarity between the two heroes really is astounding: Bolívar, the Washington of the South, and vice versa. And do not believe that this is a joke, or that that similarity in the traditional, iconographic representation is a casual or indifferent thing. It is, neither more nor less, the formula of the "common history" portrayed in stone and bronze.

Let the synthesis of the factors of American history be made. Well and good. I also believe that it is urgent to have a "vision of America." But if that vision is to be true and to correspond to concrete American reality, it cannot be a synthesis of abstractions and of statues.

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#### IV

##### A SOUTH AMERICAN VIEW

At first sight the question "Have the Americas a common history?" seems highly reasonable and natural. But it would be premature to make any reply without first settling a previous question, which I would formulate in this manner: Does America have a history? Or better,—Has the life which we have led some

distinctive quality of its own, or is it only a continuation of European life? There are many persons who think that we are only a more or less happy continuation of the histories of England, Spain, and Portugal. Others judge that we have introduced something of our own, something distinct, into the universal current of events.

For many a person America rises—like the doves which magicians suddenly and unexpectedly produce from their sleeves—on the day when Christopher Columbus sees the coasts of Guaraní, October 12, 1492. What lies behind that date—the old civilizations of the Incas, the Maya, and the Chibcha—is but a rustic stage which lends more colour to the presence of the European conqueror. Official history has long been written in this way. I dare to disagree with that criterion. I do not propose, however, to insist upon our ancient history, but rather to consider simply the history after the arrival of Columbus.

After all, that arrival is a little more important than has been the belief in Europe. If the Europeans had not been so buried in the contemplation of their own works, perhaps they would have understood that their life and their history were then acquiring a third dimension. No longer was the world to continue its evolution along the length and the breadth of Europe, but, as occurs in the geometry of space, it was to slip over the edges of that little surface, and instead of continuing to be a gaming table reduced to the bounds of its four sides, it was to become the celestial sphere which bold Magellan left suspended in space.

But in the sixteenth century Europe had internal preoccupations which greatly impeded her imagination. If there is anything in the world of history which can be presented in more radical opposition, it is the European manner of life and the American manner of life in the same sixteenth century. Then, in Europe, artists, savants, princes, and merchants vied in making the courts more beautiful, more illustrious. Spirits which through the course of several centuries have been becoming ever more refined, express themselves in a cultured and subtle language which turns aggressively against any macaronic Latin. Painters reproduce this new world of silks, velvets, and jewels on canvasses of elaborate sensuality, because to Europeans the "New World" was, in reality, not the America of savage Indians, but the Europe of the refulgent awakening of the Renaissance. Contemporary chronicles are dedicated to the painting of the leading courtesans who very soon could probably be seen, dressed or nude, in the

mirrors of Versailles. Luxury and softness appear and open to make way, that the king of the modern states may pass to receive his crown.

While this occurs in Europe, what is taking place in America? What of the gallant conquerors, the erudite or ignorant friars, the *hidalgos*, who have come to America? Some, certainly, arrive at our coasts dressed in gala attire; their fall is vertical. Here one comes to live a rustic life, a wildly rough life, which levels all men downward. Suddenly the chroniclers see that the words of the language they had brought, turn out to be false in the new theatre where they are to serve, and just as, in Europe, language is becoming converted into a courtly melody or a complicated play of scholastic elegance, so in America it catches the odour of the forest. This transformation of Castilian, which we have been able to observe very exactly in our countries, you surely have been able to note also in the chronicles written in English in these lands. Scholars who have given a little study to the manuscript of the German Ulrich Schmidl, who travelled in Paraguay, point out there the resonances of Guaraní found among the German words.

On the other hand it would be a bizarre and difficult, if not impossible undertaking to try to demonstrate that the rude and untamed environment of our land produced in the conduct of men and in the general tone of society a manner of life similar to that produced in Europe by the luxury of the courts, the theological discussion of the Reformation, the erudite urge of the Humanists, the ornamental gyrations of the Renaissance. In reality, I think that the history of America was made not by Europeans, but by Americans. The great figures of the conquest are not those who left Europe with their titles of governors to continue here their careers of steady climb in courtly rank, but they appear among ordinary common soldiers who dispossess the official captains on high seas and on mainland, by right of conquest. It is in that moment that they are born to history. Hence I once dared to state that Cortés, Pizarro, or Quesada are sons of America; consequently, their deeds and their lives belong to the history of America and not to European history. We fully realize their grandeur; we know the environment that gave them creative impulse, and, as is obvious, we find false the sketches of their lives drawn by those who have lived not the American, but the European life.

Perhaps this simple point of departure will clarify the situation a little. Some scholars have burned the midnight oil in their struggle to show precisely how brightly the flames of Humanism



burned in America, the flame of the Reformation, or of the works of Cardinal Cisneros. But whatever may be discovered in this respect will necessarily turn out to be very poor against the vigorous and clear picture of the almost primitive struggle in which the ex-Europeans found themselves involved as they faced our Indians, our serpents, our swamps, and our wild, rough seas.

When general classifications of history are made, we see that in Europe one speaks of the ancient world, medieval ages, and modern times. It is true that in academies it is the custom to discuss the extent represented by each of these denominations, but certain it is that, aside from any routine acceptance, they are very useful in somewhat breaking down the history of the lands over the seas. For us, these divisions are exotic. They tell us nothing about our own life, they do not fit into any world of ours, but into that of the "other side," as is commonly said. On the other hand, it is the constant custom of our historians, those of all America, to make these divisions of our history:—discovery, conquest, independence, and republic. The exactness of this division can also be argued—and I believe that it is possible to perfect it—but the difference between the two histories is immediately evident. And for that very reason, it seems to me absolutely reasonable to speak of an American history, in the same sense that one can speak of a European history.

Naturally, the history of America, like that of Europe, is complex. And more. It is contradictory. That is the way all histories of life are. There is a multitude of factors which apparently unite us, but which at bottom and in the last analysis are only phrases of protocol having a precisely determined value. There are also realities which indisputably differentiate us and upon which it has seemed wise not to insist. But there also exist certain common traits and certain factors which make our lives complementary, and although these traits and these factors have not always been the ones which are most evident, perhaps they are those which really offer the key to our possible continental solidarity. Finally, there are moments of universal agony, of crisis, in which histories of continents join hands to survive in the great tests with which are measured the characters of men and the vigour of their faith. The historian must make his own way through all these circumstances so as not to fall into error.

When the American Historical Association proposed as theme for our discussion "Have the Americas a common history?"—I

asked myself, "Which Americas?" It is very easy to say Latin America and Saxon America. But how far does the history of one go and where does the history of the other begin? From Florida to Labrador, or to New Mexico and to California, you find in this part of the continent a long history bound to conquerors and colonizers of Spanish origin. In fact there are certain words—like Florida or San Francisco or Los Angeles—which will always demonstrate how at least on some occasion the boundary between these little provinces of history was ill defined. Spaniards, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Germans, Scandinavians have come passing over the stage of this America of the north. If the list seems a little long to you, say simply that all have been Americans. But the fact is that neither four centuries ago, nor today, can this part of the continent be considered as an orthodox unit, free of internal contradiction. All the explorers and colonizers have brought very different ideas from the lands of their origin. Beside the friars of the missions who colonized the west, are seen the Puritans established in New England. While in the south the air has vibrated for several centuries to the chorus of sensual negroes, in Boston only the mute of the white Protestants is heard. The pentagram which at the north opens to the key of the northern mists, opens to the south with the key of the sun.

But in reality it was America herself which little by little imposed the bounds of conquest. The Europeans might embark in Bristol as well as in Cadiz, and with a determined purpose, but here America shuffled the cards and changed the order of their will. At times it seems to me as I read the chronicles of the sixteenth century that our fathers, those of Spain, were slightly more bandit-like than the fathers of you Saxon-Americans, at the time when both left Europe. Between a caravel of people who have been wrested from the hands of justice, as were many of those who formed our Spanish expeditions, and a group of Puritans in the hull of the Mayflower, there is a certain difference. And the curious part is that many of the Spanish bandits ended their lives in convents, wearing the Franciscan habit and making edifying vows so that God would pardon them their past faults and crimes. And on the other hand I understand that no few of the honest Puritans, forced to push the frontier toward the west in a war to the death against the Indians and against nature, became very strange figures of authentic bandits who looked sarcastically back upon the beatific memory of their youth.

Little by little, the hands of this America, which is more exigent



than it appears, modelled heroes and nations. It seems to me that it would be possible to base the most real, or substantial, difference which could be marked between the conquest of the north and that of the south upon two factors, which in the long run modelled two very distinct characters. In the north, the immigrants reached the coast and there formed a human concentration which had not come with the intent to explore the interior, but to establish itself and live. Only the continual arrival of new immigrants kept pushing the population toward the west, slowly stretching the frontier in a rude surge of expansion. The new arrivals found no indigenous race of great culture—here there were neither Incas nor Aztecs, certainly—and the wild Indian gradually ceded his land to force, without submitting to servitude. The European became accustomed to making his own living, to not having servants, to being his own master and his own servant, to clearing the forest himself, and to conducting himself as though within a republic of workers. In the south, colonization was very different. In the interior, on the Andes, shone the dazzling prestige of ancient nations whose chiefs bathed in gold. The conquest neither was concentrated on the coasts, nor did it stop there, and the conqueror was, in addition, an explorer. Instead of a compact front, it was very quickly seen that there were Spanish standards in all points of the interior of America—in Cuzco, in Quito, in Mexico, in Sante Fe de Bogotá. The captains found themselves with minute armies in the midst of enormous nations of Indians and the obvious and natural solution was that of reducing the latter to servitude—or, as they said at that time, to Christian civilization—whereupon at one time contact between the two races was established and the vigorous drive of the first conquerors came to an end.

But there is no need to have the illusion that this general panorama establishes an absolute line of separation between the two American worlds. Here in the north also there was a vast region where life acquired that more subdued tone of the south. Here, in Virginia or in Carolina, the Negro came to replace the Indian, and some of the English masters offer characteristics very similar to those of the Spanish *encomendos* or *hidalgos*. That which was an initial impulse several centuries ago, is still evident and has left its mark on the customs of today. Only a few days ago, in a rapid visit to North Carolina, I was speaking with a professor who carries on studies in folklore, and he said to me—"Here, in North Carolina, I have perceived for the first time in the United States, the meaning of the popular fiesta with which I became

acquainted in Mexico—the same folk verse, an equally expressive music, and even the custom of setting off firecrackers in sign of joy.”

I have mentioned some few examples which I could easily multiply, to arrive simply at this conclusion: that what unites us, or separates us, or differentiates us, or identifies us in American life is not European tradition, but our own reality, our own history, our own life. I do not even take into account certain so-called barriers—which are only difficulties of my manner of seeing, never abysses. It has been too frequently said that there is an America which speaks English and an America which speaks Castilian. In the first place, there are in South America forty-four million Brazilians who speak Portuguese; there is a great population in Paraguay that speaks Guaraní; there are very extensive regions in Bolivia where Aymará is spoken, and others in Peru and Ecuador where Quecha is spoken; there is the island of Haiti where they speak French. Moreover, some believe that we speak Spanish. You also have states where Spanish is still a popular tongue (the University of New Mexico is bilingual), and a part of Canada expresses itself in French. But what is irreconcilable in this matter of languages is not language itself, but the spirit which stirs behind the words. If Spain has proved to be only a nation without unity, it has not been the fault of any irreconcilable languages which form the linguistic map of the peninsula. After all, Basques, Galicians, Catalans, and Castilians find no difficulty in making themselves understood. The essential thing is to combine social ingredients upon the basis of mutual toleration and of an authentic co-operation of principles, as occurs in many countries which are not monolingual.

If there is anything which might serve to explain what I find fundamental and common in America, it is exactly the history of words. When I speak in what I consider my own language, I use the same words which are found listed in the dictionary of the Spanish Academy and I construct my sentences without departure from Spanish grammatical rules. However, anyone who may hear or read me, will know instantly that I am not Spanish but American. Exactly the same happens with you and the English language. Why? Simply because if language is to have any meaning, it is that of reflecting the life about it. And our American life may be very well seen in the mirror of its words. Our language in South America is less ostentatious, more natural, more simple than the Spanish of Spain. Perhaps the same thing occurs with your English as compared with that of England.

Pursuing these ideas, it seems to me that we could say that in reality, we speak a single idiom in many different languages. What is ours, what is American, is present and alive in the accent, in the content, in the colouring which we have given to English, to Castilian, to Portuguese, an accent and colour of liberty and democracy. And the history of words thus seen, is the history of America. What we keep ever before ourselves, when we contemplate the history of America, is no projection of European ideals, but the soul of this land which escapes through our gestures, which exists in the general conduct of our lives, in the permanent and inevitable confession of our words.

The contradiction in American life need not necessarily be sought in the antithesis between the United States and Latin America. This division of our life is too simplified for us to be able to accept it without reserve. In the first place, the United States is not all North America, neither within the United States may it be considered that the region of the east, to the north, with its peculiar industrial development, characterizes even the rest of the Union. Similarly, the life of Brazil seems very strange to the Colombian or the Peruvian; it seems as though they were two worlds apart. Even more. At times the history and life of the United States, which has had more communication with us, is more familiar and intelligible to us than the history and the life of Brazil. While we, for example, were building our republics on the bases laid down by the political thinkers of Philadelphia and were at once putting ourselves in contact with the United States in order to have a common international policy, while Bolívar was summoning the United States to the Amphictyonic congress, or a Colombian, Señor Manuel Torres, was giving the bases of his doctrine to President Monroe, Brazil remained separated from our panorama and enshrouded in mists that even now are scarcely beginning to disappear.

On the other hand, even the America which is most familiar to us has been gradually becoming differentiated in an ostensible way. In Argentina, for example, great cities, which have received constant European influences, seem much more like New York than like the Andean cities. And these differences, and antagonisms, many times, have an essential importance in fixing the possible unity of American history or, at least, in synchronizing it. I do not believe that this unity can be realized in any case on the basis of the similarities that are wont to be signalized by the Pan-



Americanists, or by the Hispano-Americanists or by the Indo-Americanists, or by the Saxon-Americanists. The unity of America, or the basis of her solidarity, are born of the fact that there are regions whose economies complement each other, and whose geographic insufficiency forces them to a mutual collaboration. But over and above this life of complementary factors, of interdependence and of opposing terms, there is a note of common history which dominates all our life, in the north as well as in the south; the secular struggle for liberty and the ordinary life surroundings of peoples whose political formation was, has been, and will continue to be, a constant struggle to attain the triumph of justice within democracy and through democracy. In this sense I believe that it is an error to think that our history is not differentiated from the history of Europe, whose antecedents are so different and whose ideals we have not always shared. If it is a question of adding the history of Spanish America to the history of the medieval currents of Spain, as Señor O'Gorman pretends to do, or of resuscitating the Spanish empire in Spanish America as the partisans of the so-called "Hispanism" urge, perhaps we forget that from the point of view of general ideas the war of emancipation of the old Spanish colonies could be considered as a civil war in which the defenders of liberal ideas in America imposed their will on Spanish absolutism. This single fact, quantitative and qualitative, is enough to fix the difference between the two currents which in each case were dominant in the two peoples. But the war of emancipation, in the north as well as in the south, was not only an administrative separation; it was the most expressive manifestation of the American spirit which had been forming in the course of three centuries of laborious gestation.

The reflections which I have expressed were in a great part suggested to me in reaction to my reading of the very brilliant exposition of Señor O'Gorman, whose points of view I do not share, as is obvious, but whose thesis I consider very useful because of the admirable frankness with which he has aligned himself on the opposite side in order to encourage a debate which is opportune and interesting in every respect.

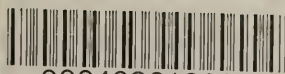
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